1999
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TRACK 1

Communications

T100 – Differences Between Public Affairs and Public Relations

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Differences Between Government & Corporate Communications

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November 3, 1999

What We'll Cover Today

- Mission of government vs. corporations
- How success is measured in both worlds
- Risk
- Research
- Similarities between govt. & corporate
- Implications for professional communicators

Missions

Corporate

- **Make money and be responsive to shareholders**
- **Promote and sell products**
- **Promote services**
- **Protect reputation**

Government

- **Serve and be responsive to taxpayers**
- **Justify, manage & preserve programs**
- **Buy products**
- **Protect reputation**

How is Success Measured?

Corporate

- Revenue, profits and valuation on Wall Street
- Product performance
- Keeping up with trends in the marketplace

Government

- Staying within budget
- Program performance
- Quality of services
- Spending all the money

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Attitude about Change and Risk

Corporate

- **Competitive pressures**
- **Accepts risk as a cost of doing business**
- **Landscape changes fast**

Government

- **DoD overall has no competitor for role, however…**
- **Competition for $ $$ within DoD**
- **Risk averse**
- **Landscape changes slowly**

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Change is Constant: Every Day in the USA....

- 3196 new corporations are born
- 2621 go out of business or are acquired
- 1984 change their address
- 704 change their phone number
- 8 change their name

Penton Research, 1999

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Research

Corporate

- **Frequent, extensive use of research**
- **Research is used throughout the entire project**
- **Operates on a live patient most of the time**

Government

- **Little market research**
- **Govt. defines what the contractor should do**
- **TRICARE is named but not “branded”**
- **Lots of satisfaction based research after the fact**

Implications for Communicators

Corporate

- **Scrutiny of every utterance**
- **Immediate impact on stock price**
- **Your job is on the line**
- **Real time communications**

Government

- **Scrutiny of every utterance**
- **Your “stock” can fall but you don’t go out of business**
- **Think of all your audiences and their agendas**
- **News moves faster than the system**

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Profit Motive

"In a free market the major objective in programming for the masses is profit, and it is whistling past the graveyard to assume that very much product is going to come over the airwaves that isn't aimed at improving the bottom line."

Walter Cronkite, A Reporters Life, 1996

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Similarities

- Both work within the same media environment
  - Real time communications
  - Investigative reporting
  - Someone speaks for you if you won't
  - Be ready
- Both share audiences
  - Congress
  - Public – taxpayers and stockholders
  - Media
  - Interest groups

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More Similarities

- Vulnerable to cyber-terrorism or mischief-making
- Both live by the 3 R’s
- Both answer to Congress in different ways

Summary

- Follow the money
- Corporate PR has more latitude
- Govt. PA is sometimes restricted from following good PR practice
- Both have equal access to and vulnerability on the Internet
- Principles of good communication are the same

Differences Between Government & Corporate Communications

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